



# Public Health Advisory

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## Web Resources

### NPS Public Health:

[http://www.nps.gov/public\\_health/](http://www.nps.gov/public_health/)

### CDC:

<http://www.cdc.gov>

### State and Local Health Departments:

<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/international/relres.html>

## CONSUMERS ADVISED OF RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH EATING RAW AND LIGHTLY COOKED SPROUTS

FDA is updating its health advisory on the risks associated with eating all raw sprouts because of a recent E. coli O157:H7 outbreak associated with alfalfa sprouts. This advisory is also being updated to specifically include raw and lightly cooked mung bean sprouts. Since FDA issued its original health advisory on sprouts in 1999, there have been several reported foodborne illness outbreaks associated with sprouts. Persons in high risk categories (i.e., children, the elderly, and the immunocompromised) should not eat raw or lightly cooked sprouts.

Outbreaks of foodborne illness from all implicated raw sprouts have involved the pathogenic bacteria Salmonella or E. coli O157:H7 and have affected persons of all ages and both genders. Healthy persons infected with these bacteria experience diarrhea, nausea, abdominal cramping and fever for several days. Those persons who wish to reduce their risk of foodborne illness should not eat raw sprouts.

For people in high risk categories, an E. coli O157:H7 infection could lead to serious complications, including hemolytic uremic syndrome, which can result in kidney failure or death. Salmonella infection (i.e., salmonellosis) in these high risk groups can also cause serious illness. As stated in the 2002 Food Code, hospitals, day care centers, nursing homes and senior centers should not serve sprouts.

There have been four foodborne illness outbreaks associated with mung bean sprouts and two outbreaks associated with alfalfa sprouts in the U.S. between 2000 and 2002. All mung bean and one alfalfa sprout outbreak involved salmonellosis. The mung bean outbreaks have been associated with raw or lightly cooked sprouts. The most recent E. coli O157:H7 outbreak was associated with alfalfa sprouts in California.

Some segments of the sprout industry have made significant strides to enhance the safety of their products by following recommendations in the 1999 Sprouts Guidance. However, adherence to these guidelines has not been universal, and outbreaks have continued to occur in association with raw and lightly cooked sprouts. The FDA offers the following advice to all consumers concerning sprouts: •Co

- Sandwiches and salads purchased at restaurants and delicatessens often contain raw sprouts. Consumers who wish to reduce their risk of foodborne illness should specifically request that raw sprouts not be added to their food.

- Homegrown sprouts also present a health risk if eaten raw or lightly cooked. Many outbreaks have been attributed to contaminated seed. If pathogenic bacteria are present in or on seed, they can grow to high levels during sprouting even under clean conditions.

The FDA will continue to closely monitor the safety of sprouts and will take further actions as necessary, including the establishment of preventive controls to protect consumers. Consumers who have eaten raw or lightly cooked sprouts and are experiencing diarrhea or other symptoms of foodborne infections are advised to consult their health care providers.

If you have any questions, please contact a Regional Public Health Consultant, park sanitarian, or call WASO Public Health .

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